

DOCKET ITEM 06-13

Alleys and Residential-8 (R-8) Zones

ISSUE: Should new development in R-8 zones that abut an alley be required to have vehicular access to all parking from the alley and be required to locate all parking areas and attached or detached garages behind the front building line?

RECOMMENDATION: Add vehicular and parking access development standards to the R-8 zone, for properties that abut a paved or gravel alley that would require:

- Vehicular access to all parking areas and attached or detached garages through the alley, and
- All parking areas and attached or detached garages to be located at the side or rear of the property; not located in front of the building and/or in the area between the front lot line and the front building line.

BACKGROUND: Other residential zones in the City have development standards with specific language for new development projects that abut an alley right-of-way, where alleys are to be used for vehicular access to parking and parking areas are not allowed between a street and building front. This is not true for the R-8 zone.

Compromising neighborhood character

Without these development standards in the R-8 zone, established neighborhood character and quality is compromised where vehicles can access parking areas and garages through the use of driveways. Although the Comprehensive Plan does not speak specifically to single lot development, the type of project that would most likely occur in a R-8 zone, it sets a preference for the style of new development in established residential neighborhoods.

Policy CD-13 of the *Community Design Element* states that new projects should draw on elements of existing development to reflect the site planning and scale of existing areas in placement of structures and location of entries. This policy applies to the location of parking areas and garages in areas with alleys as these properties have historically located parking areas and garages in the rear or side yards and used the alley as the access route to individual residences. Currently, new projects can change the character of residential areas with alleys by allowing the placement of vehicles, garages, and driveways between a home and street which reduces safety levels for pedestrians and the amount of on-street parking spaces.

Location of alleys in the R-8 zone

Staff has reviewed original plats, maps, and available data at the City to locate alley right-of-ways in the Residential-8 (R-8) zone. The Highlands, Kenndale, North Renton, and Renton Hill neighborhoods have functioning alleys as part of their street networks. There are also other alleys in the City. This recommendation speaks to alleys that are one of two access points to a property rather than alleys that are the only access point to a property.

Developed and undeveloped alley right-of-ways

It is important to note that not all alley right-of-ways have been improved. Alleys in R-8 zones have different surfaces like grass, gravel, and asphalt or a mixture. For example, in North Renton

all alleys are paved but in the Highlands area there are grass, gravel, and paved alley ways. Gravel and paved alley surfaces provide a sufficient surface for vehicle access.

Code language examples for recommendation

Other residential zones as well as Urban Overlay Districts have established parking and loading development standards for areas with alleys, providing exemplary language to evaluate as part of this process. Examples state that 1) all parking shall be provided in the rear yard when alley access is available, 2) that all parking shall be provided in the rear portion of the yard, and access shall be taken from the alley, and 3) no surface parking shall be located between a building and the front property line and that parking lots and garages shall be accessed from alleys when available.

Location

Examples 1 and 2 have language where all parking is to be provided in the rear yard when alley access is available. As found in the neighborhoods with alleys, there are properties with parking areas or garages in side yards, so it would be consistent with neighborhood character to allow the location of parking areas or attached and detached garages in the side or rear yards. It would not be consistent to allow any parking area or attached and detached garages to be located between the residential street and the front of a residence, including the side yard.

Access

Examples 2 and 3 require that parking areas and garages be accessed from alleys when available. This language would be consistent with the R-8 areas with alleys. As mentioned previously, current development standards allow access to properties with abutting alleys to have drive access from the street rather than the alley which compromises established neighborhood character, allowing for a reduction in on-street parking, an increase in curb cuts and the crossing of vehicles through pedestrian paths and sidewalks.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN COMPLIANCE: A zoning code amendment establishing development standards that require all parking to be provided in rear or side yards and vehicular access to be taken from the alley would not conflict with goals, objectives, and policies in the Comprehensive Plan.

CONCLUSION: Adding development regulations will maintain or improve established neighborhood character, maintain safe pedestrian environments, keep valued on-street parking spaces, and utilize the City's entire transportation network.